



FACT SHEET

Strengthen Iraq's Training Program for Immunization

The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) is playing a vital role in maintaining and promoting community health through a reduction in morbidity and mortality of vaccine preventable diseases. Strengthening of routine Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIAs) is crucial for the achievement of EPI targets and objectives and training of health staff, local social leaders and NGOs on basic elements of immunization is necessary to achieve quality immunization services.

EPI Staff Training and Master Trainer Program

The Iraqi Ministry of Health (MOH) has identified a need to train 23,000 on EPI in Iraq. In addition to the 677 vaccinators already trained, USAID's Primary Health Care Project in Iraq (PHCPI) has trained 1,521 vaccinators and 536 supervisors in six targeted vulnerable provinces. These are members of priority groups identified by the MOH who play an essential role in EPI activities. Through these trainings, vaccinators learn the vital role EPI plays in maintaining and promoting community health through a reduction in morbidity and mortality of vaccine preventable diseases. Workshops demonstrate that the strengthening of routine SIAs is crucial for the achievement of EPI targets and objectives and training of health staff, local social leaders and NGOs on basic elements of immunization is necessary to achieve quality immunization services.

In addition, based on a needs assessment conducted by the MOH, there was a need to train at least 80 trainers in the management of immunization and surveillance systems. PHCPI conducted three Master Trainer Programs to establish a core of master trainers from all the provinces who will cascade and sustain the training in immunization and surveillance after the project ends.

The Master Trainer Programs were comprehensive involving collaborative activities and practical hands on experience. Through these activities the MOH's immunization program will be strengthened to respond to the country's current and future immunization needs.

Standard Operating Procedures

Jointly with the MOH, PHCPI has developed three standard operating procedures (SOPs) for improved laboratory diagnostics

for key communicable diseases including polio, cholera, measles and rubella. These SOPs will be used by PHC labs in relation to quality assessment, systematic reporting and coordination with national, sub-regional, regional and international laboratories. The development of these SOPs bridges the gap between lab reporting and standardization leading to improved surveillance at all levels.

2015 Immunization Plan

Not only is immunization and the prevention of infectious diseases the most cost effective medical intervention available to public health, but it is also the right of every citizen to protect themselves against vaccine-preventable diseases. A stronger National Immunization Plan will help Iraq move towards the eradication phase of vaccine preventable diseases. As such, part of the technical assistance provided by PHCPI included review and revision of the 2015 National Immunization Plan. The revisions included changes to the introduction, current health situation, vision, mission, goal, objectives, targets, implementation strategy, and an addition of a work plan - Gantt chart.

These revisions to the 2015 National Immunization Plan will fill identified gaps and deficiencies, and, through a more comprehensive plan, will strengthen Iraq's immunization, improve the MOH's capacity and help Iraq achieve MDGs 4 & 5 on reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating diseases.



Group activities during PHCPI's Master Trainer Program in Amman

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